

Chinese Pidgin English & Chinglish

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Chinese Pidgin English (CPE)

- What is CPE?

Pidgin is a mixture of different languages. From the perspective of linguistics, Pidgin is only one stage of language development, which refers to a mixed language produced by people who have no common language of communication but are eager to communicate (Zhang, 2013).

Chinese Pidgin English (CPE) is the most famous form of Pidgin in China. Pidgin is a small river in the north of Shanghai county in the Qing Dynasty. After the Opium War, it became the boundary between the foreign concessions and the Chinese border. Because this area is where the foreign trade terminal is located, at first some people often spoke poor English as a trade intermediary between Chinese and foreigners. Later, this English directly became a common language between Chinese and foreign buyers and sellers, so this English was called Chinese Pidgin English. It plays an important role in foreign trade and diplomacy.

- The features

CPE simplifies grammar, vocabulary, and syllables.

- The influence

Its influence on English can not be ignored. The only Chinglish sentence ‘**no can do**’ that has been entered into the Oxford dictionary is from *Pidgin English sing song*. And there are countless Pidgin words included in English dictionary. Also there are Chinese words come from Pidgin English.

Chinglish

- What is Chinglish?

Chinglish refers to the abnormal English that is not in line with English cultural habits in English communication due to the influence of Chinese learners and users’ mother tongue and the rigid application of Chinese rules and habits (Li, 1993). Chinglish can be regarded as a **pidgin language**.

- Examples

① “好久不见”

long time no see

② “人山人海”

people mountain people sea

③ “不作死就不会死”

No zuo no die

④ “你行你上，不行别逼逼”

You can you up, No can no BB

⑤ “滴水之恩，涌泉相报”

You di da di da me, I hua la hua la you

- Why?

Language negative transfer.

It is because second language learners mistake some different forms between their mother tongue and the target language for the same (Tang, 2003). This will reduce learners’ learning efficiency, increase their errors in second language, and have a negative impact on second language learning.

L1 (Chinese)→L2 (English)

The Development of Pidgin

- Pidgin can always be an **interlanguage** between the first language and the target language. (e.g. Chinglish, Chinese Pidgin English.)
- Pidgin develops into a mixed language and becomes a common communication tool for people in a certain region. In this case, Pidgin becomes a mixed language, also known as **Creole**. (e.g. Singlish (the mixture of Chinese, Malay and Tamil), Tok Pisin (in The Independent State of Papua New Guinea))

Significance

- Knowing CPE can enable second language learners to remember words from Pidgin English more quickly and correctly (e.g. ketchup, bok choy).
- Second language learners’ understanding of Chinglish and the phenomenon of negative language transfer can help them modify their second language output, produce more authentic English, and thus improve their English performance.

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